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Bible Study, March 3, 2021 – HANDOUT no. 2

Session # 1 – Acts of the Apostles – Record of an Apostolic Church.

Lesson Nr: 1. An opening Class: Acts of the Apostles Inventory.

If one could argue that the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is a **SEQUEL** to the Gospel according to Saint Luke, I would propose to go even further, and entertain the idea – or a hypothesis – that the Acts of the Apostles might be actually a second part of a **TRYPYCH** – **Three Books** written by the same author, identified in this particular instance as Saint Luke.

His Gospel, smoothly transitioning into the Acts of the Apostles might be – and I think there is strong evidence for it – closed by a very elaborate (here I do believe **SOMEONE** was helping Luke to edit His initial text) and by a very profound Book of The New Testament: The **HEBREWS**. So, what about Luke as an **AUTHOR** of all **THREE**: Gospel, Acts and Hebrews?

Reasoning that Saint Luke is a physician by profession, he is a convert to Christianity (at His times probably still called simply: **The WAY**) and pre – assuming that Luke's circle of friends is much bigger and diverse than the one of an average person of his times, I would argue that The Author of the **THIRD GOSPEL** employs:

- not only his skills as a trained professional,
- His friends from numerous social strata of the Hellenistic Middle East,
- also is very well aware by composing His **OPUS** of the fact that the early **CHURCH** moves from its **NUCLEUS** in the Holy City of Jerusalem (already partially destroyed i.e.: The Temple, by Luke's times) to the coastal cities of the Mediterranean Sea, to **ROME** and other important cities, that:
 - A) **DO NOT** use **ARAMAIC** (or Hebrew) as a **LINGUA FRANCA** (it's Greek, not even Latin yet)
 - B) **MIGHT NOT** have a vibrant **JEWISH DIASPORA** (remember – many of the first converts to the **GOOD NEWS** about and of **JESUS** are Jews)

C) Inhabitants of the COAST ARE PRACTICING pagans (term used to describe NON – JEWISH, and NON – CHRISTIAN individuals practicing numerous beliefs, worshipping numerous gods and goddesses)

D) Target of Luke’s WORK therefore are – in a very broad sense – the GENTILES.

As such, Saint Luke tries to **REMEDY** the problem of the non – JEWS (the Gentiles) to understand and navigate through the JEWISH WORLD better, hence even in the OPENING to His Gospel, Acts, and even HEBREWS the INTRODUCTION is very telling: (let us now please, read together the OPENING VERSES of Saint Luke Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and the Hebrews).

The saying goes: “Wisdom increases with each hair turning gray” (please, consider reading some of the Wisdom Literature of The Old Testament to see how RESPECTED, DESIRED, and almost PERSONIFIED the WISDOM is by the culture and sages of the ANCIENT TIMES) and if such a saying is even a half way true, naturally we might entertain the IDEA that Saint Luke, composing His final BOOK - Hebrews - is much older, wiser and respected (who knows, maybe even a PRESBYTEROI – or EPISCOPOI – an overseer of Local Community of Christians) and tries to present Christ Jesus to his audience as a FULFILMENT and an EPITOME of the HIGH PRIEST after the likeness of MELCHIZEDEK. Maybe HEBREWS is a SUM of ALL SERMONS Saint Luke heard or gave on the topic, we will never know, yet what precedes HEBREWS, in my opinion, is Luke’s TALE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

If not for the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, we will have rather a VERY DIFFICULT time to FRAME the TIMELINE and DRAW a PICTURE of an EARLY and APOSTOLIC Church.

The way Saint Luke crafts the canvas for HIS story about “ALL THE DOING of the APOSTLES – The ACTS “ and if we try to stick to His OUTLINE – we are presented with a rather **METHODOLOGICAL, CONSISTENT** – and yes – not free from the **SUPERNATURAL** (all the miracles) and from Geographical Mistakes (some errors based on the time set of the work) and a very **VIBRANT PICTURE** of the Early CHURCH.

Might this be a reason many scholars and spiritual directors call ACTS Of THE APOSTLES a “**GOSPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**”? I hope we will discover some deeper gems buried in the text of the Acts of the Apostles as we continue next week. Hope you will join us again!

Fr. Mirek